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Müller, Friedrich Max

On freedom

London

[1879]

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ON FREEDOM:

An Address

DELIVERED IN

THE TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM,

ON THE 20TH OF OCTOBER, 1879,

BY

PROFESSOR F. MAX MÜLLER, M.A.

PRESIDENT.

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BOX

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ON FREEDOM:

An Address.

NOT more than twenty years have passed since John Stuart Mill sent forth his plea for Liberty.*

If there is one among the leaders of thought in England who, by the elevation of his character and the calm composure of his mind, deserved the so often misplaced title of Serene Highness, it was, I think, John Stuart Mill.

But in his Essay "On Liberty," Mill for once becomes passionate. In presenting his Bill of Rights, in stepping forward as the champion of individual liberty, a new spirit seems to have taken possession of him. He speaks like a martyr, or the defender of martyrs. The individual human soul, with its unfathomable endowments, and its

* Mill tells us that his Essay "On Liberty" was planned and written down in 1854. It was in mounting the steps of the Capitol in January, 1855, that the thought first arose of converting it into a volume, and it was not published till 1859. The author, who in his Autobiography speaks with exquisite modesty of all his literary performances, allows himself one single exception when speaking of his Essay "On Liberty." "None of my writings," he says, "have been either so carefully composed or so sedulously corrected as this." Its final revision was to have been the work of the winter of 1858 to 1859, which he and his wife had arranged to pass in the South of Europe, a hope which was frustrated by his wife's death. "The 'Liberty,'" he writes, "is likely to survive longer than anything else that I have written (with the possible exception of the 'Logic'), because the conjunction of her mind with mine has rendered it a kind of philosophic textbook of a single truth, which the changes progressively taking place in modern society tend to bring out into stronger relief: the importance, to man and society, of a large variety of character, and of giving full freedom to human nature to expand itself in innumerable and conflicting directions."

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capacity of growing to something undreamt of in our philosophy, becomes in his eyes a sacred thing, and every encroachment on its world wide domain is treated as sacrilege. Society, the arch-enemy of the rights of individuality, is represented like an evil spirit, whom it behoves every true man to resist with might and main, and whose demands, as they cannot be altogether ignored, must be reduced at all hazards to the lowest level.

I doubt whether any of the principles for which Mill pleaded so warmly and strenuously in his Essay "On Liberty" would at the present day be challenged or resisted, even by the most illiberal of philosophers, or the most conservative of politicians. Mill's demands sound very humble to *our* ears. They amount to no more than this, "that the individual is not accountable to society for his actions so far as they concern the interests of no person but himself, and that he may be subjected to social or legal punishments for such actions only as are prejudicial to the interests of others."

Is there any one here present who doubts the justice of that principle, or who would wish to reduce the freedom of the individual to a smaller measure? Whatever social tyranny may have existed twenty years ago, when it wrung that fiery protest from the lips of John Stuart Mill, can we imagine a state of society, not totally Utopian, in which the individual man need be less ashamed of his social fetters, in which he could more freely utter all his honest convictions, more boldly propound all his theories, more fearlessly agitate for their speedy realization; in which, in fact, each man can be so entirely himself as the society of England, such as it now is, such as generations of hard-thinking and hard-working Englishmen have made it, and left it as the most sacred inheritance to their sons and daughters?

Look through the whole of history, not excepting the brightest days of republican freedom at Athens and Rome, and I know you will not find one single period in which the measure of Liberty accorded to each individual was larger than it is at present, at least in England. And if you wish to realize the full blessings of the time in which we live, compare Mill's plea for Liberty with another written not much more than two hundred years ago, and by a thinker not inferior either in power or boldness to Mill himself. According to Hobbes, the only freedom which an individual in his ideal state has a right to claim

is what he calls "freedom of thought," and that freedom of thought consists in our being able to think what we like—so long as we keep it to ourselves. Surely, such freedom of thought existed even in the days of the Inquisition, and we should never call thought free, if it had to be kept a prisoner in solitary and silent confinement. By freedom of thought we mean freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of action, whether individual or associated, and of that freedom the present generation, as compared with all former generations, the English nation, as compared with all other nations, enjoys, there can be no doubt, a good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and sometimes running over.

It may be said that some dogmas still remain in politics, in religion, and in morality; but those who defend them claim no longer any infallibility, and those who attack them, however small their minority, need fear no violence, nay, may reckon on an impartial and even sympathetic hearing, as soon as the people discover in their pleadings the true ring of honest conviction and the warmth inspired by an unselfish love of truth.

It has seemed strange therefore to many readers of Mill, particularly on the Continent, that this cry for Liberty, this demand for freedom for every individual to be what he is, and to develop all the germs of his nature, should have come from what is known as the freest of all countries, England. We might well understand such a cry of indignation if it had reached us from Russia; but why should English philosophers, of all others, have to protest against the tyranny of society? It is true, nevertheless, that in countries governed despotically, the individual, unless he is obnoxious to the Government, enjoys far greater freedom, or rather licence, than in a country like England, which governs itself. Russian society, for instance, is extremely indulgent. It tolerates in its rulers and statesmen a haughty defiance of the simplest rules of social propriety, and it seems amused rather than astonished or indignant at the vagaries, the frenzies, and outrages, of those who in brilliant drawing-rooms or lecture-rooms preach the doctrines of what is called Nihilism or Individualism,*—viz., "that society must be regenerated by a struggle

* Herzen defined Nihilism as "the most perfect freedom from all settled concepts, from all inherited restraints and impediments which hamper the progress of the Occidental intellect with the historical drag tied to its feet."

for existence and the survival of the strongest, processes which Nature has sanctioned, and which have proved successful in wild animals." If there is danger in these doctrines the Government is expected to see to it. It may place watchmen at the doors of every house and at the corner of every street, but it must not count on the better classes coming forward to enrol themselves as special constables, or even on the co-operation of public opinion which in England would annihilate that kind of Nihilism with one glance of scorn and pity.

In a self-governed country like England, the resistance which society, if it likes, can oppose to the individual in the assertion of his rights, is far more compact and powerful than in Russia, or even in Germany. Even where it does not employ the arm of the law, society knows how to use that softer, but more crushing pressure, that calm, but Gorgon-like look which only the bravest and stoutest hearts know how to resist.

It is rather against that indirect repression which a well-organized society exercises, both through its male and female representatives, that Mill's demand for Liberty seems directed. He does not stand up for unlimited licence; on the contrary, he would have been the most strenuous defender of that balance of power between the weak and the strong on which all social life depends. But he resents those smaller penalties which society will always inflict on those who disturb its dignified peace and comfort:—avoidance, exclusion, a cold look, a stinging remark. Had Mill any right to complain of these social penalties? Would it not rather amount to an interference with individual liberty to wish to deprive any individual or any number of individuals of those weapons of self-defence? Those who themselves think and speak freely, have hardly a right to complain, if others claim the same privilege. Mill himself called the Conservative party the stupid party *par excellence*, and he took great pains to explain that it was so, not by accident, but by necessity. Need he wonder if those whom he whipped and scourged used their own whips and scourges against so merciless a critic?

Free-thinkers, and I use that name as a title of honour for all who, like Mill, claim for every individual the fullest freedom in thought, word, or deed, compatible with the freedom of others, are apt to

make one mistake. Conscious of their own honest intentions, they cannot bear to be mistrusted or slighted. They expect society to submit to their often very painful operations as a patient submits to the knife of the surgeon. That is not in human nature. The enemy of abuses is always abused by his enemies. Society will never yield one inch without resistance, and few reformers live long enough to receive the thanks of those whom they have reformed. Mill's unsolicited election to Parliament was a triumph not often shared by social reformers; it was as exceptional as Bright's admission to a seat in the Cabinet, or Stanley's appointment as Dean of Westminster. Such anomalies will happen in a country fortunately so full of anomalies as England; but, as a rule, a political reformer must not be angry if he passes through life without the title of Right Honourable; nor should a man, if he will always speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, be disappointed if he dies a martyr rather than a Bishop.

But granting even that in Mill's time there existed some traces of social tyranny, where are they now? Look at the newspapers and the journals. Is there any theory too wild, any reform too violent, to be openly defended? Look at the drawing-rooms or the meetings of learned societies. Are not the most eccentric talkers the spoiled children of the fashionable world? When young lords begin to discuss the propriety of limiting the rights of inheritance, and young tutors are not afraid to propose curtailing the long vacation, surely we need not complain of the intolerance of English society.

Whenever I state these facts to my German and French and Italian friends, who from reading Mill's Essay "On Liberty" have derived the impression that, however large an amount of political liberty England may enjoy, it enjoys but little of intellectual freedom, they are generally willing to be converted so far as London, or other great cities, are concerned. But look at your Universities, they say, the nurseries of English thought! Can you compare their mediæval spirit, their monastic institutions, their scholastic philosophy, with the freshness and freedom of the Continental Universities? Strong as these prejudices about Oxford and Cambridge have always been, they have become still more intense since Professor Helmholtz, in an inaugural address which he delivered at his installation as Rector

of the University of Berlin, lent the authority of his great name to these misconceptions. "The tutors," he says,* "in the English Universities cannot deviate by a hair's-breadth from the dogmatic system of the English Church, without exposing themselves to the censure of their Archbishops and losing their pupils." In German Universities, on the contrary, we are told that the extreme conclusions of materialistic metaphysics, the boldest speculations within the sphere of Darwin's theory of evolution, may be propounded without let or hindrance, quite as much as the highest apotheosis of Papal infallibility.

Here the facts on which Professor Helmholtz relies are entirely wrong; and the writings of some of our most eminent tutors supply a more than sufficient refutation of his statements. Archbishops have no official position whatsoever in English Universities, and their censure of an Oxford tutor would be resented as impertinent by the whole University. Nor does the University, as such, exercise any very strict control over the tutors, even when they lecture not to their own College only. Each Master of Arts at Oxford claims now the right to lecture (*venia docendi*), and I doubt whether they would ever submit to those restrictions which, in Germany, the Faculty imposes on every *Privat-docent*. *Privat-docents* in German Universities have been rejected by the Faculty for incompetence, and silenced for insubordination. I know of no such cases at Oxford during my residence of more than thirty years, nor can I think it likely that they should ever occur.

As to the extreme conclusions of materialistic metaphysics, there are Oxford tutors who have grappled with the systems of such giants as Hobbes, Locke, or Hume, and who are not likely to be frightened by Büchner and Vogt.

I know comparisons are odious, and I am the last man who would wish to draw comparisons between English and German Universities unfavorable to the latter. But with regard to freedom of thought, of speech, and action, Professor Helmholtz, if he would spend but a few weeks at Oxford, would find that we enjoy a fuller measure of

* Ueber die Akademische Freiheit der Deutschen Universitäten, Rede beim Antritt des Rectorats an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin, am 15 October 1877, gehalten von Dr. H. Helmholtz.

freedom here than the Professors and *Privat-docents* in any Continental University. The publications of some of our professors and tutors ought at least to have convinced him that if there is less of brave words and turbulent talk in their writings, they display throughout a determination to speak the truth, which may be matched, but could not easily be excelled, by the leaders of thought in France, Germany, or Italy.

The real difference between English and Continental Universities is that the former govern themselves, the latter are governed. Self-government entails responsibilities, sometimes restraints and reticences. I may here be allowed to quote the words of another eminent Professor of the University of Berlin, Du Bois Reymond, who, in addressing his colleagues, ventured to tell them,* "We have still to learn from the English how the greatest independence of the individual is compatible with willing submission to salutary, though irksome, statutes." That is particularly true when the statutes are self-imposed. In Germany, as Professor Helmholtz tells us himself, the last decision in almost all the more important affairs of the Universities rests with the Government, and he does not deny that in times of political and ecclesiastical tension, a most inconsiderate use has been made of that power. There are, besides, the less important matters, such as raising of salaries, leave of absence, scientific missions, even titles and decorations, all of which enable a clever Minister of Instruction to assert his personal influence among the less independent members of the University. In Oxford the University does not know the Ministry, nor the Ministry the University. The acts of the Government, be it Liberal or Conservative, are freely discussed, and often powerfully resisted by the academic constituencies, and the personal dislike of a Minister or Ministerial Councillor could as little injure a professor or tutor as his favour could add one penny to his salary.

But these are minor matters. What gives their own peculiar character to the English Universities is a sense of power and responsibility: power, because they are the most respected among the

* Ueber eine Akademie der Deutschen Sprache, p. 34. Another keen observer of English life, Dr. K. Hillebrand, in an article in the October number of the *Nineteenth Century*, remarks: "Nowhere is there greater individual liberty than in England, and nowhere do people renounce it more readily of their own accord."

numerous corporations in the country; responsibility, because the higher education of the whole country has been committed to their charge. Their only master is public opinion as represented in Parliament, their only incentive their own sense of duty. There is no country in Europe where Universities hold so exalted a position, and where those who have the honour to belong to them may say with greater truth, *Noblesse oblige*.

I know the dangers of self-government, particularly where higher and more ideal interests are concerned, and there are probably few who wish for a real reform in schools and Universities who have not occasionally yielded to the desire for a Dictator, of a Bismarck or a Falk. But such a desire springs only from a momentary weakness and despondency; and no one who knows the difference between being governed and governing oneself, would ever wish to descend from that higher though dangerous position to a lower one, however safe and comfortable it might seem. No one who has tasted freedom would ever wish to exchange it for anything else. Public opinion is sometimes a hard taskmaster, and majorities can be great tyrants to those who want to be honest to their own convictions. But in the struggle of all against all, each individual feels that he has his rightful place, and that he may exercise his rightful influence. If he is beaten, he is beaten in fair fight; if he conquers, he has no one else to thank. No doubt despotic Governments have often exercised the most beneficial patronage in encouraging and rewarding poets, artists, and men of science. But men of genius who have conquered the love and admiration of a whole nation are greater than those who have gained the favour of the most brilliant Courts; and we know how some of the fairest reputations have been wrecked on the patronage which they had to accept at the hands of powerful Ministers or ambitious Sovereigns.

But to return to Mill and his plea for Liberty. Though I can hardly believe that, were he still among us, he would claim a larger measure of freedom for the individual than is now accorded to every one of us in the society in which we move, yet the chief cause on which he founded his plea for Liberty, the chief evil which he thought could be remedied only if society would allow more elbow-room to individual genius, exists in the same degree as in his time—aye, even

in a higher degree. The principle of Individuality has suffered more at present than perhaps at any former period of history. The world is becoming more and more gregarious, and what the French call our *nature moutonnaire*, "our muttonlike nature," our tendency to leap where any bell-wether has leapt before, becomes more and more prevalent in politics, in religion, in art, and even in science. M. de Tocqueville expressed his surprise how much more Frenchmen of the present day resemble one another than did those of the last generation. The same remark, adds John Stuart Mill, might be made of England in a greater degree. "The modern *régime* of public opinion," he writes, "is in an unorganized form what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China."

I fully agree with Mill in recognizing the dangers of uniformity, but I doubt whether what he calls the *régime* of public opinion is alone, or even chiefly, answerable for it. No doubt there are some people in whose eyes uniformity seems an advantage rather than a disadvantage. If all were equally strong, equally educated, equally honest, equally rich, equally tall, or equally small, society would seem to them to have reached the highest ideal. The same people admire an old French garden, with its clipped yew-trees, forming artificial walls and towers and pyramids, far more than the giant yews which, like large serpents, clasp the soil with their coiling roots, and overshadow with their dark green branches the white chalk cliffs of the Thames. But those French gardens, unless they are constantly clipped and prevented from growing, soon fall into decay. As in nature, so in society, uniformity means but too often stagnation, while variety is the surest sign of health and vigour. The deepest secret of nature is its love of continued novelty. Its tendency, it unrestrained, is towards constantly creating new varieties, which, if they fulfil their purpose, become fixed for a time, or, it may be, for ever; while others, after they have fulfilled their purpose, vanish to make room for new and stronger types.

The same is the secret of human society. It consists and lives in individuals, each being meant to be different from all the others, and

to contribute his own peculiar share to the common wealth. As no tree is like any other tree, and no leaf on the same tree like any other leaf, no human being is exactly like any other human being, nor is it meant to be. It is in this endless, and to us inconceivable, variety of human souls that the deepest purpose of human life is to be realized; and the more society fulfils that purpose, the more it allows free scope for the development of every individual germ, the richer will be the harvest in no distant future. Such is the mystery of individuality that I do not wonder if even those philosophers who, like Mill, reduce the meaning of the word *sacred* to the very smallest compass, see in each individual soul something sacred, something to be revered, even where we cannot understand it, something to be protected against all vulgar violence.

Where I differ from Mill and his school is on the question as to the quarter from whence the epidemic of uniformity springs which threatens the free development of modern society. Mill points to the society in which we move; to those who are in front of us, to our contemporaries. I feel convinced that our real enemies are at our back, and that the heaviest chains which are fastened on us are those made, not by the present, but by past generations—by our ancestors, not by our contemporaries.

It is on this point, on the trammels of individual freedom which we may almost be said to be born into the world, and on the means by which we may shake off these old chains, or at all events carry them more lightly and gracefully, that I wish to speak to you this evening.

You need not be afraid that I am going to enter upon the much discussed subject of heredity, whether in its physiological or psychological aspects. It is a favourite subject just now, and the most curious facts have been brought together of late to illustrate the working of what is called heredity. But the more we know of these facts, the less we seem able to comprehend the underlying principle. Inheritance is one of those numerous words which by their very simplicity and clearness are so apt to darken our counsel. If a father has blue eyes and the son has blue eyes, what can be clearer than that he inherited them? If the father stammers and the son stammers, who can doubt but that it came by inheritance? If the

father is a musician and the son a musician, we say very glibly that the talent was inherited. But what does *inherited* mean? In no case does it mean what *inherited* usually means—something external, like money, collected by a father, and, after his death, secured by law to his son. Whatever else inherited may mean, it does not mean that. But unfortunately the word is there, it seems almost pedantic to challenge its meaning, and people are always grateful if an easy word saves them the trouble of hard thought.

Another apparent advantage of the theory of heredity is that it never fails. If the son has blue, and the father black, eyes, all is right again, for either the mother, or the grandmother, or some historic or prehistoric ancestor, may have had blue eyes, and atavism, we know, will assert itself after hundreds and thousands of years.

Do not suppose that I deny the broad facts of what is called by the name of heredity. What I deny is that the name of heredity offers any scientific solution of a most difficult problem. It is a name, a metaphor, quite as bad as the old metaphor of *innate ideas*; for there is hardly a single point of similarity between the process by which a son may share the black eyes, the stammering, or the musical talent of his father, and that by which, after his father's death, the law secures to the son the possession of the pounds, shillings, and pence which his father held in the Funds.

But whatever the true meaning of heredity may be, certain it is that every individual comes into the world heavy-laden. Nowhere has the consciousness of the burden which rests on each generation as it enters on its journey through life found stronger expression than among the Buddhists. What other people call by various names, "fate or providence," "tradition or inheritance," "circumstances or environment," they call *Karman*, deed—what has been done, whether by ourselves or by others, the accumulated work of all who have come before us, the consequences of which we have to bear, both for good and for evil. Originally this *Karman* seems to have been conceived as personal, as the work which we ourselves have done in former existences. But, as personally we are not conscious of having done such work in former ages, that kind of *Karman*, too, might be said to be impersonal. To the question how *Karman* began, the

accumulation of what forms the condition of all that exists at present, Buddhism has no answer to give, any more than any other system of religion or philosophy. The Buddhists say it began with *avidyā*, and *avidyā* means ignorance.* They are much more deeply interested in the question how *Karman* may be annihilated, how each man may free himself from the influence of *Karman*, and Nirvāna, the highest object of all their dreams, is often defined by Buddhist philosophers as "freedom from *Karman*." †

What the Buddhists call by the general name of *Karman*, comprehends all influences which the past exercises on the present, both physically and mentally. ‡ It is not my object to examine or even to name all these influences, though I confess nothing is more interesting than to look upon the surface of our modern life as we look on a geological map, and to see the most ancient formations cropping out everywhere under our feet. Difficult as it is to colour a geological map of England, it would be still more difficult to find a sufficient variety of colours to mark the different ingredients of the intellectual surface of this island.

That all of us, whether we speak English or German, or French or Russian, are really speaking an ancient Oriental tongue, incredible as it would have sounded a hundred years ago, is now admitted by everybody. Though the various dialects now spoken in Europe have been separated many thousands of years from the Sanskrit, the ancient classical language of India, yet so unbroken is the bond that holds the West and East together that in many cases an intelligent Englishman might still guess the meaning of a Sanskrit word. How little difference is there between Sanskrit *śanu* and English *son*, between Sanskrit *duhitar* and English *daughter*, between Sanskrit *vid*, to know, and English *to wit*, between Sanskrit *vaksh*, to grow, and English *to wax*! Think how we value a Saxon urn, or a Roman coin, or a Celtic weapon! how we dig for them, clean them, label them, and carefully deposit them in our museums! Yet what is

* Spencer Hardy, "Manual of Buddhism," p. 391.

† Ibid., p. 39.

‡ "As one generation dies and gives way to another, the heir of the consequences of all its virtues and all its vices, the exact result of pre-existent causes, so each individual, in the long chain of life, inherits all, of good or evil, which all his predecessors have done or been; and takes up the struggle towards enlightenment precisely there where they left it."—Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 104.

their antiquity compared with the antiquity of such words as *son* or *daughter*, *father* and *mother*? There are no monuments older than those collected in the handy volumes which we call Dictionaries, and those who know how to interpret those English antiquities—as you may see them interpreted, for instance, in Grimm's Dictionary of the German, in Littré's Dictionary of the French, or in Professor Skeats' Etymological Dictionary of the English Language—will learn more of the real growth of the human mind than by studying many volumes on logic and psychology.

And as by our language we belong to the Aryan stratum, we belong through our letters to the Hamitic. We still write English in hieroglyphics; and in spite of all the vicissitudes through which the ancient hieroglyphics have passed in their journey from Egypt to Phœnicia, from Phœnicia to Greece, from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England, when we write a capital F *ℱ*, when we draw the top line and the smaller line through the middle of the letter, we really draw the two horns of the cerastes, the horned serpent which the ancient Egyptians used for representing the sound of f. They write the name of the king whom the Greeks called *Cheops*, and they themselves *Chu-fu*, like this:*

Here the first sign, the sieve, is to be pronounced *chu*; the second, the horned serpent, *fu*, and the little bird, again, *u*. In the more cursive or Hieratic writing the horned serpent appears as *Ⅎ*; in the later Demotic as *ℳ* and *ℴ*. The Phœnicians, who borrowed their letters from the Hieratic Egyptian, wrote *ℱ* and *Ⅎ*. The Greeks, who took their letters from the Phœnicians, wrote *Ϝ*. When the Greeks, instead of writing like the Phœnicians from right to left, began to write from left to right, they turned each letter, and as *Ⅎ* became K, our k, so *ℱ*, vau, became F, the Greek so-called Digamma, the Latin F.

The first letter in *Chu-fu*, too, still exists in our alphabet, and in the transverse line of our H we must recognize the last remnant of the lines which divide the sieve. The sieve appears in Hieratic as *Ⓢ*, in Phœnician as *Ⓢ*, in Ancient Greek as *Ϝ*, which occurs on an inscription found at Mycenæ and elsewhere as the sign of the spiritus

* Bunsen, "Egypt," ii., pp. 77, 150.

as *ser*, while in Latin it is known to us as the letter H.* In the same manner the undulating line of our capital *L* still recalls very strikingly the bent back of the crouching lion, which in the later hieroglyphic inscriptions represents the sound of L.

If thus in our language we are Aryan, in our letters Egyptian, we have only to look at our watches to see that we are Babylonian. Why is our hour divided into sixty minutes, our minutes into sixty seconds? Would not a division of the hour into ten, or fifty, or a hundred minutes have been more natural? We have sixty divisions on the dials of our watches simply because the Greek astronomer Hipparchus, who lived in the second century B.C., accepted the Babylonian system of reckoning time, that system being sexagesimal. The Babylonians knew the decimal system, but for practical purposes they counted by *sassi* and *sari*, the *sassos* representing 60, the *saros* 60×60 , or 3600. From Hipparchus that system found its way into the works of Ptolemy, about 150 A.D., and thence it was carried down the stream of civilization, finding its last resting-place on the dial-plates of our clocks.

And why are there twenty shillings to our sovereign? Again the real reason lies in Babylon. The Greeks learnt from the Babylonians the art of dividing gold and silver for the purpose of trade. It has been proved that the current gold piece of Western Asia was exactly the sixtieth part of a Babylonian *mná*, or *mina*. It was nearly equal to our sovereign. The difficult problem of the relative value of gold and silver in a bi-monetary currency had been solved to a certain extent in the ancient Mesopotamian kingdom, the proportion between gold and silver being fixed at 1 to 13½. The silver shekel current in Babylon was heavier than the gold shekel in the proportion of 13½ to 10, and had therefore the value of one-tenth of a gold shekel; and the half silver shekel, called by the Greeks a drachma, was worth one-twentieth of a gold shekel. The drachma, or half silver shekel, may therefore be looked upon as the most ancient type of our own silver shilling in its relation of one-twentieth of our gold sovereign.†

* Mémoire sur l'Origine Egyptienne de l'Alphabet Phénicien, par E. de Rougé, Paris, 1874.

† See Brandis, "Das Münzwesen."

I shall mention only one more of the most essential tools of our mental life—namely, our *figures*, which we call Arabic, because we received them from the Arabs, but which the Arabs called Indian, because they received them from the Indians—in order to show you how this nineteenth century of ours is under the sway of centuries long past and forgotten; how we are what we are, not by ourselves, but by those who came before us, and how the intellectual ground on which we stand is made up of the detritus of thoughts which were first thought, not on these isles nor in Europe, but on the shores of the Oxus, the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Indus.

Now you may well ask *Quorsum hæc omnia?*—What has all this to do with freedom and with the free development of individuality? Because a man is born the heir of all the ages, can it be said that he is not free to grow and to expand, and to develop all the faculties of his mind? Are those who came before him, and who left him this goodly inheritance, to be called his enemies? Is that chain of tradition which connects him with the past really a galling fetter, and not rather the leading-strings without which he would never learn to walk straight?

Let us look at the matter more closely. No one would venture to say that every individual should begin life as a young savage, and be left to form his own language, and invent his own letters, numerals, and coins. On the contrary, if we comprehend all this and a great deal more, such as religion, morality, and secular knowledge, under the general name of *education*, even the most advanced defenders of individualism would hold that no child should enter society without submitting, or rather without being submitted, to education. Most of us would even go further, and make it criminal for parents or even for communities to allow children to grow up uneducated. The excuse of worthless parents that they are at liberty to do with their children as they like, has at last been blown to the winds. I still remember the time when pseudo-Liberals were not ashamed to say that, whatever other nations, such as the Germans, might do, England would never submit to compulsory education. That wicked sophistry, too, has at last been silenced, and among the principal advocates of compulsory education, and of the necessity of curtailing the freedom of savage parents of savage children, have been Mill and his friends,

the apostles of liberty and individualism.* A new era may be said to date in the history of every nation from the day on which "compulsory education" becomes part of their statute-book; and I may congratulate the most Liberal town in England on having proved itself the most inexorable tyrant in carrying out the principle of compulsory education.

But do not let us imagine that compulsory education is without its dangers. Like a powerful engine, it must be carefully watched, if it is not to produce, what all compulsion will produce, a slavish receptivity, and, what all machines do produce, monotonous uniformity.

We know that all education must in the beginning be purely dogmatic. Children are taught language, religion, morality, patriotism, and afterwards at school, history, literature, mathematics, and all the rest, long before they are able to question, to judge, or choose for themselves, and there is hardly anything that a child will not believe if it comes from those in whom the child believes.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic, no doubt, must be taught dogmatically, and they take up an enormous amount of time, particularly in English schools. English spelling is a national misfortune, and in the keen international race between all the countries of Europe, it handicaps the English child to a degree that seems incredible till we look at statistics. I know the difficulties of a Spelling Reform, I know what people mean when they call it impossible; but I also know that personal and national virtue consists in doing so-called impossible things, and that no nation has done, and has still to do, so many impossible things as the English.

But, granted that reading, writing, and arithmetic occupy nearly the whole school-time and absorb the best powers of the pupils, can not something be done in play-hours? Is there not some work that can be turned into play, and some play that can be turned into work? Cannot the powers of observation be called out in a child while collecting flowers, or stones, or butterflies? Cannot his judgment be strengthened either in gymnastic exercises, or in measuring the area of a field or the height of a tower? Might not all this be

* "Is it not almost a self-evident axiom, that the State should require and compel the education, up to a certain standard, of every human being who is born its citizen? Yet who is there that is not afraid to recognize and assert this truth?"—*On Liberty*, p. 188.

done without a view to examinations or payment by results, simply for the sake of filling the little dull minds with one sunbeam of joy, such sunbeams being more likely hereafter to call hidden precious germs into life than the deadening weight of such lessons as, for instance, that *th-ough* is though, *thr-ough* is through, *en-ough* is enough. A child who believes that will hereafter believe anything. Those who wish to see Natural Science introduced into elementary schools frighten schoolmasters by the very name of Natural Science. But surely every schoolmaster who is worth his salt should be able to teach children a love of Nature, a wondering at Nature, a curiosity to pry into the secrets of Nature, an acquisitiveness for some of the treasures of Nature, and all this acquired in the fresh air of the field and the forest, where, better than in frouzy lecture-rooms, the edge of the senses can be sharpened, the chest be widened, and that freedom of thought fostered which made England what it was even before the days of compulsory education.

But in addressing you here to-night it was my intention to speak of the higher rather than of elementary education.

All education, as it now exists in most countries of Europe, may be divided into three stages—*elementary*, *scholastic*, and *academic*; or call it *primary*, *secondary*, and *tertiary*.

Elementary education has at last been made compulsory in most civilized countries. Unfortunately, however, it seems impossible to include under compulsory education anything beyond the very elements of knowledge—at least for the present; though, with proper management, I know from experience that a well-conducted elementary school can afford to provide instruction in extra subjects—such as natural science, modern languages, and political economy—and yet, with the present system of Government grants, be self-supporting.*

The next stage above the elementary is *scholastic* education, as it is supplied in grammar schools, whether public or private. According as the pupils are intended either to go on to a university, or to enter at once on leaving school on the practical work of life, these schools are divided into two classes. In the one class, which in Germany are called *Real-schulen*, less Latin is taught, and no Greek, but more of

* *Times*, January 25, 1879.

mathematics, modern languages, and physical science; in the other, called *Gymnasia* on the Continent, classics form the chief staple of instruction.

It is during this stage that education, whether at private or public schools, exercises its strongest levelling influence. Little attention can be paid at large schools to individual tastes or talents. In Germany, even more perhaps than in England, it is the chief object of a good and conscientious master to have his class as uniform as possible at the end of the year; and he receives far more credit from the official examiner if his whole class marches well and keeps pace together, than if he can parade a few brilliant and forward boys, followed by a number of straggling laggards.

As to the character of the teaching at school, how can it be otherwise than authoritative or dogmatic? The Socratic method is very good if we can find the *virī Socratici* and leisure for discussion. But at school, which now may seem to be called almost in mockery σχολή, or leisure, the true method is, after all, that patronized by the great educators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Boys at school must turn their mind into a row of pigeon-holes, filling as many as they can with useful notes, and never forgetting how many are empty. There is an immense amount of positive knowledge to be acquired between the ages of ten and eighteen—rules of grammar, strings of vocables, dates, names of towns, rivers, and mountains, mathematical formulas, &c. All depends here on the receptive and retentive powers of the mind. The memory has to be strengthened, without being overtaxed, till it acts almost mechanically. Learning by heart, I believe, cannot be too strongly recommended during the years spent at school. There may have been too much of it when, as the Rev. H. C. Adams informs us in his "Wykehamica" (p. 357), boys used to say by heart 13,000 and 14,000 lines, when one repeated the whole of Virgil, nay, when another was able to say the whole of the English Bible by rote:—"Put him on where you would, he would go fluently on, as long as any one would listen."

No intellectual investment, I feel certain, bears such ample and such regular interest as gems of English, Latin, or Greek literature deposited in our memory during our childhood and youth, and taken up from time to time in the happy hours of our solitude.

One fault I have to find with most schools, both in England and on the Continent. Boys do not read enough of the Greek and Roman classics. The majority of our masters are scholars by profession, and they are apt to lay undue stress on what they call accurate and minute scholarship, and to neglect wide and cursory reading. I know the arguments for minute accuracy, but I also know the mischief that is done by an exclusive devotion to critical scholarship before we have acquired a real familiarity with the principal works of classical literature. The time spent in our schools in learning the rules of grammar and syntax, writing exercises, and composing verses, is too large. Look only at our Greek and Latin grammars, with all their rules and exceptions, and exceptions on exceptions! It is too heavy a weight for any boy to carry; and no wonder that when one of the thousand small rules which they have learnt by heart is really wanted, it is seldom forthcoming. The end of classical teaching at school should be to make our boys acquainted not only with the language, but with the literature and history, the ancient thought of the ancient world. Rules of grammar, syntax, or metre, are but means towards that end; they must never be mistaken for the end itself. A young man of eighteen, who has probably spent on an average ten years in learning Greek and Latin, ought to be able to read any of the ordinary Greek or Latin classics without much difficulty; nay, with a certain amount of pleasure. He might have to consult his dictionary now and then, or guess the meaning of certain words; he might also feel doubtful sometimes whether certain forms came from *ἔγω*, I send, or *εἶμι*, I go, or *εἰμι*, I am, particularly if preceded by prepositions. In these matters the best scholars are least inclined to be pharisaical; and whenever I meet in the controversies of classical scholars the favourite phrase, "Every schoolboy knows, or ought to know, this," I generally say to myself, "No, he ought not." Anyhow, those who wish to see the study of Greek and Latin retained in our public schools ought to feel convinced that it will certainly not be retained much longer, if it can be said with any truth that young men who leave school at eighteen are in many cases unable to read or to enjoy a classical text, unless they have seen it before.

Classical teaching, and all purely scholastic teaching, ought to be

finished at school. When a young man goes to University, unless he means to make scholarship his profession, he ought to be free to enter upon a new career. If he has not learnt by that time so much of Greek and Latin as is absolutely necessary in after-life for a lawyer, or a student of physical science, or even a clergyman, either he or his school is to blame. I do not mean to say that it would not be most desirable for every one during his University career to attend some lectures on classical literature, on ancient history, philosophy, or art. What is to be deprecated is, that the University should have to do the work which belongs properly to the school.

The best colleges at Oxford and Cambridge have shown by their matriculation examinations what the standard of classical knowledge ought to be at eighteen or nineteen. That standard can be reached by boys while still at school, as has been proved both by the so-called local examinations, and by the examinations of schools held under the Delegates appointed by the Universities. If, therefore, the University would reassert her old right, and make the first examination, called at Oxford Responsions, a general matriculation examination for admission to the University, not only would the public schools be stimulated to greater efforts, but the teaching of the University might assume, from the very beginning, that academic character which ought to distinguish it from mere schoolboy work.

Academic teaching ought to be not merely a continuation, but in one sense a correction of scholastic teaching. While at school instruction must be chiefly dogmatic, at University it is to be Socratic, for I find no better name for that method which is to set a man free from the burden of purely traditional knowledge; to make him feel that the words which he uses are often empty, that the concepts he employs are, for the most part, mere bundles picked up at random; that even where he knows facts, he does not know their evidence; and where he expresses opinions, they are mostly mere dogmas, adopted by him without examination.

But for the Universities, I should indeed fear that Mill's prophecies might come true, and that the intellect of Europe might drift into dreary monotony. The Universities always have been, and, unless they are diverted from their original purpose, always will be, the

guardians of the freedom of thought, the protectors of individual spontaneity; and it was owing, I believe, to Mill's ignorance of true academic teaching that he took so desponding a view of the generation growing up under his eyes.

When we leave school, our heads are naturally brimful of dogma, that is, of knowledge and opinions at second-hand. Such dead knowledge is extremely dangerous, unless it is sooner or later revived by the spirit of free inquiry. It does not matter whether our scholastic dogmas be true or false. The danger is the same. And why? Because to place either truth or error above the reach of argument is certain to weaken truth and to strengthen error. Secondly, because to hold as true on the authority of others anything which concerns us deeply, and which we could prove ourselves, produces feebleness, if not dishonesty. And, thirdly, because to feel unwilling or unable to meet objections by argument is generally the first step towards violence and persecution.

I do not think of religious dogmas only. They are generally the first to rouse inquiry, even during our schoolboy days, and they are by no means the most difficult to deal with. Dogma often rages where we least expect it. Among scientific men the theory of evolution is at present becoming, or has become, a dogma. What is the result? No objections are listened to, no difficulties recognized, and a man like Virchow, himself the strongest supporter of evolution, who has the moral courage to say that the descent of man from any ape whatsoever is, as yet, before the tribunal of scientific zoology, "not proven," is howled down in Germany in a manner worthy of Ephesians and Galatians. But at present I am thinking not so much of any special dogmas, but rather of that dogmatic state of mind which is the almost inevitable result of the teaching at school. I think of the whole intellect, what has been called the *intellectus sibi permisus*, and I maintain that it is the object of academic teaching to rouse that intellect out of its slumber by questions not less startling than when Galileo asked the world whether the sun was really moving and the earth stood still; or when Kant asked whether time and space were objects, or necessary forms of our sensuous intuition. Till our opinions have thus been tested and stood the test, we can hardly call them our own.

How true this is with regard to religion has been boldly expressed by Bishop Beveridge.

"Being conscious to myself," he writes in his "Private Thoughts on Religion," "how great an ascendant Christianity holds over me beyond the rest, as being that religion whereinto I was born and baptized; that which the supreme authority has enjoined and my parents educated me in; that which every one I meet withal highly approves of, and which I myself have, by a long-continued profession, made almost natural to me: I am resolved to be more jealous and suspicious of this religion than of the rest, and be sure not to entertain it any longer without being convinced, by solid and substantial arguments, of the truth and certainty of it."

This is bold and manly language from a Bishop nearly two hundred years ago, and I certainly think that the time has come when some of the divinity lecturers at Oxford and Cambridge might well be employed in placing a knowledge of the sacred books of other religions within the reach of undergraduates. Many of the difficulties—most of them of our own making—with regard to the origin, the landing down, the later corruptions and misinterpretations of sacred texts, would find their natural solution, if it was shown how exactly the same difficulties arose and had to be dealt with by theologians of other creeds. If some—ay, if many—of the doctrines of Christianity were met with in other religions also, surely that would not affect their value, or diminish their truth; while nothing, I feel certain, would more effectually secure to the pure and simple teaching of Christ its true place in the historical development of the human mind than to place it side by side with the other religions of the world. In the series of translations of the "Sacred Books of the East" of which the first three volumes have just appeared,* I wished myself to include a new translation of the Old and New Testaments; and when that series is finished it will, I believe, be admitted that nowhere would these two books have had a grander setting, or have shone with a brighter light, than surrounded by the Veda, the Zendavesta, the Buddhist Tripitaka, and the Qur'an.

But as I said before, I was not thinking of religious dogmas only, or even chiefly, when I maintained that the character of academic teaching must be Socratic, not dogmatic. The evil of dogmatic teaching lies much deeper, and spreads much further.

I think only of language, the work of other people, not of our-

* "Sacred Books of the East," edited by M. M., vols. i., ii., iii.; Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1879.

selves, which we pick up at random in our race through life. Does not every word we use require careful examination and revision? It is not enough to say that language assists our thoughts or colours them, or possibly obscures them. No, we know now that language and thought are indivisible. It was not from poverty of expression that the Greek called reason and language by the same word, *lógos*. It was because they knew that, though we may distinguish between thought and speech, as we distinguish between body and soul, it is as impossible to tear the one by violence away from the other as it is to separate the concave side of a lens from its convex side. This is something to learn and to understand, for, if properly understood, it will supply the key to most of our intellectual puzzles, and serve as the safest thread through the whole labyrinth of philosophy.

"It is evident," as Hobbes remarks,* "that truth and falsity have no place but amongst such living creatures as use speech. For though some brute creatures, looking upon the image of a man in a glass, may be affected with it, as if it were the man himself, and for this reason fear it or fawn upon it in vain; yet they do not apprehend it as true or false, but only as like; and in this they are not deceived. Wherefore, as men owe all their true ratiocination to the right understanding of speech, so also they owe their errors to the misunderstanding of the same; and as all the ornaments of philosophy proceed only from man, so from man also is derived the ugly absurdity of false opinion. For speech has something in it like to a spider's web (as it was said of old of Solon's laws), for by contexture of words tender and delicate wits are ensnared or stopped, but strong wits break easily through them."

Let me illustrate my meaning by at least one instance.

Among the words which have proved spider's webs, ensnaring even the greatest intellects of the world from Aristotle down to Leibniz, the terms *genus*, *species*, and *individual* occupy a very prominent place. The opposition of Aristotle to Plato, of the Nominalists to the Realists, of Leibniz to Locke, of Herbart to Hegel, turns on the true meaning of these words. At school, of course, all we can do is to teach the received meaning of *genus* and *species*; and if a boy can trace these terms back to Aristotle's *γένος* and *εἶδος*,

* Computation or Logic," t. iii., viii., p. 36.

and show in what sense that philosopher used them, every examiner would be satisfied.

But the time comes when we have to act as our own examiners, and when we have to give an account to ourselves of such words as *genus* and *species*. Some people write, indeed, as if they had seen a *species* and a *genus* walking about in broad daylight; but a little consideration will show us that these words express subjective concepts, and that, if the whole world were silent, there would never have been a thought of a *genus* or a *species*. There are languages in which we look in vain for corresponding words; and if we had been born in such a language, these terms and thoughts would not exist for us. They came to us, directly or indirectly, from Aristotle. But Aristotle did not invent them, he only defined them in his own way, so that, for instance, according to him, all living beings would constitute a *genus*, men a *species*, and Socrates an *individual*.

No one would say that Aristotle had not a perfect right to define these terms, if those who use them in his sense would only always remember that they are thinking the thoughts of Aristotle, and not their own. The true way to shake off the fetters of old words, and to learn to think our own thoughts, is to follow them up from century to century, to watch their development, and in the end to bring ourselves face to face with those who first found and framed both words and thoughts. If we do this with *genus* and *species*, we shall find that the words which Aristotle defined—viz. *γένος* and *εἶδος*—had originally a very different and far more useful application than that which he gave to them. *Γένος*, *genus*, meant generation, and comprehended such living beings only as were known to have a common origin, however they might differ in outward appearance, as, for instance, the spaniel and the bloodhound, or, according to Darwin, the ape and the man. *Εἶδος*, *species*, on the contrary, meant appearance, and comprehended all such things as had the same form or appearance, whether they had a common origin or not, as if we were to speak of a species of four-footed, two-footed, horned, winged, or blue animals.

That two such concepts, as we have here explained, had a natural justification we may best learn from the fact that exactly the same thoughts found expression in Sanskrit. There, too, we find *gāti*,

generation, used in the sense of *genus*, and opposed to *ākriti*, appearance, used in the sense of *species*.

So long as these two words or thoughts were used independently (much as we now speak of a genealogical as independent of a morphological classification) no harm could accrue. A family, for instance, might be called a *γένος*, the *gens* or clan was a *γένος*, the nation (*gnatio*) was a *γένος*, the whole human kith and kin was a *γένος*; in fact, all that was descended from common ancestors was a true *γένος*. There is no obscurity of thought in this.

On the other side, taking *εἶδος* or species in its original sense, one man might be said to be like another in his *εἶδος* or appearance. An ape, too, might quite truly be said to have the same *εἶδος* or species or appearance as a man, without any prejudice as to their common origin. People might also speak of different *εἶδη* or forms or classes of things, such as different kinds of metals, or tools, or armour, without committing themselves in the least to any opinion as to their common descent.

Often it would happen that things belonging to the same *γένος*, such as the white man and the negro, differed in their *εἶδος* or appearance; often also that things belonging to the same *εἶδος*, such as eatables, differed in their *γένος*, as, for instance, meat and vegetables.

All this is clear and simple. The confusion began when these two terms, instead of being co-ordinate, were subordinated to each other by the philosophers of Greece, so that what from one point of view was called a *genus*, might from another be called a species, and *vice versa*. Human beings, for instance, were now called a *species*, all living beings a *genus*, which may be true in logic, but is utterly false in what is older than logic—viz. language, thought, or fact. According to language, according to reason, and according to Nature, all human beings constitute a *γένος*, or generation, so long as they are supposed to have common ancestors; but with regard to all living beings we can only say that they form an *εἶδος*—that is, agree in certain appearances, until it has been proved that even Mr. Darwin was too modest in admitting at least four or five different ancestors for the whole animal world.*

* Lectures on Mr. Darwin's "Philosophy of Language," *Fraser's Magazine*, June, 1873, p. 26.

In tracing the history of these two words, *γένος* and *εἶδος*, you may see passing before your eyes almost the whole panorama of philosophy, from Plato's ideas down to Hegel's *Idee*. The question of *genera*, their origin and subdivision, occupied chiefly the attention of natural philosophers, who, after long controversies about the origin and classification of *genera* and *species*, seem at last, thanks to the clear sight of Darwin, to have arrived at the old truth which was prefigured in language—namely, that Nature knows nothing but *genera*, or generations, to be traced back to a limited number of ancestors, and that the so-called *species* are only *genera*, whose genealogical descent is *as yet* more or less obscure.

But the question as to the nature of the *εἶδος* became a vital question in every system of philosophy. Granting, for instance, that women in every clime and country formed one species, it was soon asked what constituted a species? If all women shared a common form, what was that form? Where was it? So long as it was supposed that all women descended from Eve, the difficulty might be slurred over by the name of heredity. But the more thoughtful would ask even then how it was that, while all individual women came and went and vanished, the form in which they were cast remained the same?

Here you see how philosophical mythology springs up. The very question what *εἶδος* or species or form was, and where these things were kept, changed those words from predicates into subjects. *Εἶδος* was conceived as something independent and substantial, something within or above the individuals participating in it, something unchangeable and eternal. Soon there arose as many *εἶδη* or forms or types as there were general concepts. They were considered the only true realities of which the phenomenal world is only as a shadow that soon passeth away. Here we have, in fact, the origin of Plato's ideas, and of the various systems of idealism which followed his lead, while the opposite opinions that ideas have no independent existence, and that the one is nowhere found except in the many (*τὸ ἐν παντί τὰ πολλὰ*), was strenuously defended by Aristotle and his followers.*

The same red thread runs through the whole philosophy of the Middle Ages. Men were cited before councils and condemned as

* Prantl, "Geschichte der Logik," vol. i. p. 121.

heretics because they declared that *animal, man, or woman* were mere names, and that they could not bring themselves to believe in an ideal animal, an ideal man, an ideal woman as the invisible, supernatural, or metaphysical types of the ordinary animal, the individual man, the single woman. Those philosophers, called *Nominalists*, in opposition to the *Realists*, declared that all general terms were *names only*, and that nothing could claim reality but the individual.

We cannot follow this controversy further, as it turns up again between Locke and Leibniz, between Herbart and Hegel. Suffice it to say that the knot, as it was tied by language, can be untied by the science of language alone, which teaches us that there is and can be no such thing as "a name only." That phrase ought to be banished from all works on philosophy. A name is and always has been the subjective side of our knowledge, but that subjective side is as impossible without an objective side as a key is without a lock. It is useless to ask which of the two is the more real, for they are real only by being, not two, but one. Realism is as one-sided as Nominalism. But there is a higher Nominalism, which might better be called the Science of Language, and which teaches us that, apart from sensuous perception, all human knowledge is by names and by names only, and that the object of names is always the general.

This is but one out of hundreds of thousands of cases to show how names and concepts which come to us by tradition must be submitted to very careful snuffing before they will yield a pure light. What I mean by academic teaching and academic study is exactly this process of snuffing, this changing of traditional words into living words, this tracing of modern thought back to ancient primitive thought, this living, as it were, once more, so far as it concerns us, the whole history of human thought ourselves, till we are as little afraid to differ from Plato or Aristotle as from Comte or Darwin.

Plato and Aristotle are, no doubt, great names; every schoolboy is awed by them, even though he may have read very little of their writings. This, too, is a kind of dogmatism that requires correction. Now, at University, a young student might hear the following, by no means respectful, remarks about Aristotle, which I copy from one of the greatest English scholars and philosophers:—"There is nothing so absurd that the old philosophers, as Cicero saith, who was one of

them, I have not some of them maintained; and I believe that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy than that which now is called Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; or more repugnant to government than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*; nor more ignorantly than a great part of his *Ethics*." I am far from approving this judgment, but I think that the shock which a young scholar receives on seeing his idols so mercilessly broken is salutary. It throws him back on his own resources; it makes him honest to himself. If he thinks the criticism thus passed on Aristotle unfair, he will begin to read his works with new eyes. He will not only construe his words, but try to reconstruct in his own mind the thoughts so carefully elaborated by that ancient philosopher. He will judge of their truth without being swayed by the authority of a great name, and probably in the end value what is valuable in Aristotle, or Plato, or any other great philosopher far more highly and honestly than it he had never seen them trodden under foot.

But do not suppose that I look upon the Universities as purely iconoclastic, as chiefly intended to teach us how to break the idols of the schools. Far from it! But I do look upon them as meant to fresher the atmosphere which we breathe at school, and to shake our mind to its very roots, as a storm shakes the young oaks, not to throw them down, but to make them grasp all the more firmly the hard soil of fact and truth! "*Stand upright on thy feet*" ought to be written over the gate of every college, if the epidemic of uniformity and sequacity which Mill saw approaching from China, and which since his time has made such rapid progress Westward, is ever to be stayed.

Academic freedom is not without its dangers; but there are dangers which it is safer to face than to avoid. In Germany—so far as my own experience goes—students are often left too much to themselves, and it is only the cleverest among them, or those who are personally recommended, who receive from the professors that personal guidance and encouragement which should and could be easily extended to all.

There is too much time given in the German Universities to mere lecturing, and often in simply retailing to a class what each student might read in books often in a far more perfect form. Lectures are

useful if they teach us how to teach ourselves; if they stimulate; if they excite sympathy and curiosity; if they give advice that springs from personal experience; if they warn against wrong roads; if, in fact, they have less the character of a show-window than of a workshop. Half an hour's conversation with a tutor or a professor often does more than a whole course of lectures in giving the right direction and the right spirit to a young man's studies. Here I may quote the words of Professor Helmholtz, in full agreement with him. "When I recall the memory of my own University life," he writes, "and the impression which a man like Johannes Müller, the professor of physiology, made on us, I must set the highest value on the personal intercourse with teachers from whom one learns how thought works on independent heads. Whoever has come in contact but once with one or several first-class men will find his intellectual standard changed for life."

In English Universities, on the contrary, there is too little of academic freedom. There is not only guidance, but far too much of constant personal control. It is often thought that English undergraduates could not be trusted with that amount of academic freedom which is granted to German students, and that most of them, if left to choose their own work, their own time, their own books, and their own teachers, would simply do nothing. This seems to me unfair and untrue. Most horses, if you take them to the water, will drink; and the best way to make them drink is to leave them alone. I have lived long enough in English and in German Universities to know that the intellectual fibre is as strong and sound in the English as in the German youth. But if you supply a man, who wishes to learn swimming, with bladders—nay, if you insist on his using them—he will use them, but he will probably never learn to swim. Take them away, on the contrary, and depend on it, after a few aimless strokes and a few painful gulps, he will use his arms and his legs, and he will swim. If young men do not learn to use their arms, their legs, their muscles, their senses, their brain, and their heart too, during the bright years of their University life, when are they to learn it? True, there are thousands who never learn it, and who float happily on through life buoyed up on mere bladders. The worst that can happen to them is that some day the bladders may burst, and they may be

left stranded or drowned. But these are not the men whom England wants to fight her battles. It has often been pointed out of late that many of those who, during this century, have borne the brunt of the battle in the intellectual warfare in England, have not been trained at our Universities, while others who have been at Oxford and Cambridge, and have distinguished themselves in after-life, have openly declared that they attended hardly any lectures in college, or that they derived no benefit from them. What can be the ground of that? Not that there is less work done at Oxford than at Leipzig, but that the work is done in a different spirit. It is free in Germany; it has now become almost compulsory in England. Though an old professor myself, I like to attend, when I can, some of the professorial lectures in Germany; for it is a real pleasure to see hundreds of young faces listening to a teacher on the history of art, on modern history, on the science of language, or on philosophy, without any view to examinations, simply from love of the subject or of the teacher. No one who knows what the real joy of learning is, how it lightens all drudgery and draws away the mind from mean pursuits, can see without indignation that what ought to be the freest and happiest years in a man's life should often be spent between cramming and examinations.

And here I have at last mentioned the word, which to many friends of academic freedom, to many who dread the baneful increase of uniformity, may seem the cause of all mischief, the most powerful engine for intellectual levelling—*Examination*.

There is a strong feeling springing up everywhere against the tyranny of examinations, against the cramping and withering influence which they are supposed to exercise on the youth of England. I cannot join in that outcry. I well remember that the first letters which I ventured to address to the *Times*, in very imperfect English, were in favour of examinations. They were signed *La Carrière ouverte*, and were written long before the days of the Civil Service Commission! I well remember, too, that the first time I ventured to speak, or rather to strammer, in public, was in favour of examinations. That was in 1857 at Exeter, when the first experiment was made, under the auspices of Sir T. Acland, in establishing the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. I have been an examiner myself for many

years, I have watched the growth of that system in England from year to year, and in spite of all that has been said and written of late against examinations, I confess I do not see how it would be possible to abolish them, and return to the old system of appointment by patronage.

But though I have not lost my faith in examinations, I cannot conceal the fact that I am frightened by the manner in which they are conducted, and by the results which they produce. As you are interested yourselves at this Midland Institute, in the successful working of examinations, you will perhaps allow me in conclusion to add a few remarks on the safeguards necessary for the efficient working of examinations.

All examinations are a means to ascertain how pupils have been taught; they ought never to be allowed to become the end for which pupils are taught.

Teaching with a view to examinations lowers the teacher in the eyes of his pupils; learning with a view to examination is apt to produce shallowness and dishonesty.

Whatever attractions learning possesses in itself, and whatever efforts were formerly made by boys at school from a sense of duty, all this is lost if they once imagine that the highest object of all learning is gaining marks in examinations.

In order to maintain the proper relation between teacher and pupil, all pupils should be made to look to their teachers as their natural examiners and fairest judges, and therefore in every examination the report of the teacher ought to carry the greatest weight. This is the principle followed abroad in all examinations of candidates at public schools; and even in their examination on leaving school, which gives them the right to enter the University, they know that their success depends far more on the work which they have done during the years at school, than on the work done on the few days of their examination. There are outside examiners appointed by Government to check the work done at schools and during the examinations; but the cases in which they have to modify or reverse the award of the master are extremely rare, and they are felt to reflect seriously on the competency or impartiality of the school authorities.

To leave examinations entirely to strangers reduces them to the level of lotteries, and fosters a cleverness in teachers and taught often akin to dishonesty. An examiner may find out what a candidate knows *not*, he can hardly ever find out all he knows; and even if he succeeds in finding out *how much* a candidate knows, he can never find out *how* he knows it. On these points the opinion of the masters who have watched their pupils for years is indispensable for the sake of the examiner, for the sake of the pupils, and for the sake of the teachers.

I know I shall be told that it would be impossible to trust the masters, and to be guided by their opinion, because they are interested parties. Now, first of all, there are far more honest men in the world than dishonest, and it does not answer to legislate as if all schoolmasters were rogues. It is enough that they should know that their reports would be scrutinized, to keep even the most reprobate of teachers from bearing false witness in favour of their pupils.

Secondly, I believe that unnecessary temptation is now being placed before all parties concerned in examinations. The proper reward for a good examination should be honour, not pounds, shillings, and pence. The mischief done by pecuniary rewards offered in the shape of scholarships and exhibitions at school and University, begins to be recognized very widely. To train a boy of twelve for a race against all England is generally to overstrain his faculties, and often to impair his usefulness in later life; but to make him feel that by his failure he will entail on his father the loss of a hundred a year, and on his teacher the loss of pupils, is simply cruel at that early age.

It is always said that these scholarships and exhibitions enable the sons of poor parents to enjoy the privilege of the best education in England, from which they would otherwise be debarred by the excessive costliness of our public schools. But even this argument, strong as it seems, can hardly stand, for I believe it could be shown that the majority of those who are successful in obtaining scholarships and exhibitions at school or at University are boys whose parents have been able to pay the highest price for their children's previous education. If all these prizes were abolished, and the funds thus set

free used to lessen the price of education at school and in college, I believe that the sons of poor parents would be far more benefited than by the present system. It might also be desirable to lower the school-fees in the case of the sons of poor parents, who were doing well at school from year to year; and, in order to guard against favouritism, an examination, particularly *visà vis*, before all the masters of a school, possibly even with some outside examiner, might be useful. But the present system bids fair to degenerate into mere horse-racing, and I shall not wonder if, sooner or later, the two-year olds entered for the race have to be watched by their trainer that they may not be overfed or drugged against the day of the race. It has come to this, that schools are bidding for clever boys in order to run them in the races, and in France, I read, that parents actually extort money from schools by threatening to take away the young racers that are likely to win the Derby.*

If we turn from the schools to the Universities we find here, too, the same complaints against over-examination. Now it seems to me that every University, in order to maintain its position, has a perfect right to demand two examinations, but no more: one for admission, the other for a degree. Various attempts have been made in Germany, in Russia, in France, and in England to change and improve the old academic tradition, but in the end the original, and, as it would seem, the natural system, has generally proved its wisdom and reasserted its right.

If a University surrenders the right of examining those who wish to be admitted, the tutors will often have to do the work of schoolmasters, and the professors can never know how high or how low they should aim in their public lectures. Besides this, it is almost inevitable, if the Universities surrender the right of a matriculation-examination, that they should lower, not only their own standard, but likewise the standard of public schools. Some Universities, on the contrary, like over-anxious mothers, have multiplied examinations so as to make quite sure, at the end of each term or each year that the pupils confided to them have done at least some work. This kind of forced labour may do some good to the incorrigibly idle, but it does the greatest harm to all the rest. If there is an

* L. Noiré, "Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch," p. 157; "Todtes Wissen."

examination at the end of each year, there can be no freedom left for any independent work. Both teachers and taught will be guided by the same pole-star—examinations; no deviation from the beaten track will be considered safe, and all the pleasure derived from work done for its own sake, and all the just pride and joy, which those only know who have ever ventured out by themselves on the open sea of knowledge, must be lost.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by the brilliant show of examination papers.

It is certainly marvellous what an amount of knowledge candidates will produce before their examiners; but those who have been both examined and examiners know best how fleeting that knowledge is, and how different from that other knowledge which has been acquired slowly and quietly, for its own sake, for our own sake, without a thought as to whether it would ever pay at examinations or not. A candidate, after giving most glibly the dates and the titles of the principal works of Cobbett, Gibbon, Burke, Adam Smith, and David Hume, was asked whether he had ever seen any of their writings, and he had to answer, No. Another, who was asked which of the works of Pheidias he had seen, replied that he had only read the first two books. That is the kind of dishonest knowledge which is fostered by too frequent examinations. There are two kinds of knowledge, the one that enters into our very blood, the other which we carry about in our pockets. Those who read for examinations have generally their pockets cram full; those who work on quietly and have their whole heart in their work are often discouraged at the small amount of their knowledge, at the little life-blood they have made. But what they have learnt has really become their own, has invigorated their whole frame, and in the end they have often proved the strongest and happiest men in the battle of life.

Omniscience is at present the bane of all our knowledge. From the day he leaves school and enters the University a man ought to make up his mind that in many things he must remain either altogether ignorant, or be satisfied with knowledge at second-hand. Thus only can he clear the deck for action. And the sooner he finds out what his own work is to be, the more useful and delightful will be his life at University and later. There are few men who have a passion for

all knowledge, there is hardly one who has not a hobby of his own. Those so-called hobbies ought to be utilized, and not, as they are now, discouraged, if we wish our Universities to produce more men like Faraday, Carlyle, Grote, or Darwin. I do not say that in an examination for a University degree a minimum of what is now called general culture should not be insisted on; but in addition to that, far more freedom ought to be given to the examiner to let each candidate produce his own individual work. This is done to a far greater extent in Continental than in English Universities, and the examinations are therefore mostly confided to the members of the *Senatus Academicus*, consisting of the most experienced teachers, and the most eminent representatives of the different branches of knowledge in the University. Their object is not to find out how many marks each candidate may gain by answering a larger or smaller number of questions, and then to place them in order before the world like so many organ pipes. They want to find out whether a man, by the work he has done during his three or four years at University, has acquired that vigour of thought, that maturity of judgment, and that special knowledge, which fairly entitle him to an academic status, to a degree, with or without special honours. Such a degree confers no material advantages: it does not entitle its holder to any employment in Church or State; it does not vouch even for his being a fit person to be made an Archbishop or Prime Minister. All this is left to the later struggle for life; and in that struggle it seems as if those who, after having surveyed the vast field of human knowledge, have settled on a few acres of their own and cultivated them as they were never cultivated before, who have worked hard and have tasted the true joy and happiness of hard work, who have gladly listened to others, but always depended on themselves, were, after all, the men whom great nations delighted to follow as their royal leaders in their onward march towards greater enlightenment, greater happiness, and greater freedom.

To sum up. No one can read Mill's Essay "On Liberty" at the present moment without feeling that even during the short period of the last twenty years the cause which he advocated so strongly and passionately, the cause of individual freedom, has made rapid progress,

* Mill, "On Liberty," p. 193.

aye, has carried the day. In no country *may* a man be so entirely himself, so true to himself and yet loyal to society, as in England.

But, although the enemy whose encroachments Mill feared most and resented most has been driven back and forced to keep within his own bounds,—though such names as Dissent and Nonconformity, which were formerly used in society as fatal darts, seem to have lost all the poison which they once contained,—Mill's principal fears have nevertheless not been belied, and the blight of uniformity which he saw approaching with its attendant evils of feebleness, indifference, and squacity, has been spreading more widely than ever in his days.

It has even been maintained that the very freedom which every individual now enjoys has been detrimental to the growth of individuality; that you must have an Inquisition if you want to see martyrs; that you must have despotism and tyranny to call forth heroes. The very measures which Mill and his friends advocated so warmly, compulsory education and competitive examinations, are pointed out as having chiefly contributed to produce that large array of pass-men, that dead level of uninteresting excellence, which is the *beau idéal* of a Chinese Mandarin, while it frightened and disheartened such men as Humboldt, Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill.

There may be some truth in all this, but it is certainly not the whole truth. Education, as it has to be carried on, whether in elementary or in public schools, is no doubt a heavy weight which might well press down the most independent spirit; it is, in fact, neither more nor less than placing, in a systematized form, on the shoulders of every generation the ever-increasing mass of knowledge, experience, custom, and tradition that has been accumulated by former generations. We need not wonder, therefore, if in some schools all spring, all vigour, all joyousness of work is crushed out under that load of names and dates, of anomalous verbs and syntactic rules, of mathematical formulas and geometrical axioms, which boys are expected to bring up for competitive examinations.

But a remedy has been provided, and we are ourselves to blame if we do not avail ourselves of it to the fullest extent. Europe erected its Universities, and called them the homes of the Liberal Arts, and determined that between the slavery of the school and the routine of practical life every man should have at least three years of freedom.

What Socrates and his great pupil Plato had done for the youth of Greece,* these new academies were to do for the youth of Italy, France, England, Spain, and Germany; and, though with varying success, they have done it. The mediæval and modern Universities have been from century to century the homes of free thought. Here the most eminent men have spent their lives, not merely in retailing traditional knowledge, as at school, but in extending the frontiers of science in all directions. Here, in close intercourse with their teachers, or under their immediate guidance, generation after generation of boys, fresh from school, have grown up into men during the three years of their academic life. Here, for the first time, each man has been encouraged to dare to be himself, to follow his own tastes, to depend on his own judgment, to try the wings of his mind, and, lo, like young eagles thrown out of their nest, they could fly. Here the old knowledge accumulated at school was tested, and new knowledge acquired straight from the fountain-head. Here knowledge ceased to be a mere burden, and became a power invigorating the whole mind, like snow which during winter lies cold and heavy on the meadows, but when it is touched by the sun of spring melts away, and fructifies the ground for a rich harvest.

That was the original purpose of the Universities; and the more they continue to fulfil that purpose the more will they secure to us that real freedom from tradition, from custom, from mere opinion and superstition, which can be gained by independent study only; the more will they foster that "human development in its richest diversity" which Mill, like Humboldt, considered as the highest object of all society.

Such academic teaching need not to be confined to the old Universities. There is many a great University that sprang from smaller beginnings than your Midland Institute. Nor is it necessary, in order to secure the real benefits of academic teaching, to have all the paraphernalia of a University, its colleges and fellowships, its caps and gowns. What is really wanted are men who have done good work in their life, and who are willing to teach others how to work for themselves, how to think for themselves, how to judge for themselves.

* Zeller, "Ueber den wissenschaftlichen Unterricht bei den Griechen," 1878, p. 9.

That is the true academic stage in every man's life, when he learns to work, not to please others, be they schoolmasters or examiners, but to please himself, when he works from sheer love of work, and for the highest of all purposes, the conquest of truth. Those only who have passed through that stage know the real blessings of work. To the world at large they may seem mere drudges—but the world does not know the triumphant joy with which the true mountaineer, high above clouds and mountain walls that once seemed unsurpassable, drinks in the fresh air of the High Alps, and away from the fumes, the dust, and the noises of the city, revels alone, in freedom of thought, in freedom of feeling, and in the freedom of the highest faith.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

**END OF
TITLE**